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RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 1934
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0696
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0041
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0486

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000329

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA WANTS ADDITIONAL FORCES FOR AFGHANISTAN
TO OPERATE UNDER U.S. VICE DUTCH COMMAND

REF: A. CANBERRA 293

[1](#)B. CANBERRA 196

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole, for reasons 1.4 (a),(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: On February 28, we received a briefing from Australian Defence Force (ADF) CMDR Jonathan Sadlier and Australian Department of Defence (ADOD) Afghanistan Section Assistant Director Malcolm Brailey, which provided additional information about the proposed Australian troop increase in Afghanistan (Ref A). Contrary to the impression provided in an earlier briefing (Ref A), Sadlier indicated that the GOA was inclined to have the Australian Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) operate in Oruzgan Province under the U.S.-led Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), rather than under Dutch command in NATO/ISAF. Despite Dutch opposition to the plan, the Australians feel that placing their SOTG under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) command and control would, among other benefits, allow them to take a more aggressive posture against the Taliban during the spring offensive. Sadlier cautioned that the ADF was still in a "reconnaissance" phase regarding its plans for Afghanistan, and that the Cabinet would not make a final decision until late March. Australia will be looking to the U.S. for some enablers, such as helicopter support. End Summary.

ADF WANTS TO BE AGGRESSIVE, BUT ISAF RULES OF ENGAGEMENT TOO LIMITED

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Sadlier stated that, while no decision had been made, the ADF was leaning towards operating under OEF command and control, and specifically under CJSOTF, rather than under the Dutch-led PRT of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). According to Sadlier, the ADF's desire to work under CJSOTF was brought about by three main issues: a lack of access within ISAF to enablers that the SOTG considered critical; ISAF's restrictive Rules of Engagement that necessitated a defensive, rather than offensive posture; and an expected Dutch drawdown in mid-2008.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) While the Australians have previously declared

their overall satisfaction about working with the Dutch in Oruzgan, they have repeatedly expressed frustration that the Dutch were focused on reconstruction and were not being pro-active militarily in the province (Ref B). Sadlier reiterated this frustration, and expressed Australia's deep concern about the expected Taliban spring offensive. By operating under OEF, he stated, the ADF would be able to take a more aggressive posture against the Taliban.

DUTCH OPPOSED TO PLAN

14. (S/NF) The Government of the Netherlands has expressed its opposition to the ADF's plan for a SOTG under CJSOTF command in Oruzgan during meetings with the Australian Vice Chief of the Defence Force in The Hague this week. The Dutch DCM also called on DCM Clune to express concern with the plan. According to Sadlier, the Dutch feel that it would be inefficient to have troops in Oruzgan operating under two different commands. He stated that the Dutch have had problems in the past with U.S. Special Operations Forces not providing the Dutch with sufficient information about their operations in Oruzgan, and that the Dutch feared a similar problem with the Australian SOTG. Sadlier commented that, given the close working relationship between the Dutch and Australians in Oruzgan, this was unlikely to be as much of an issue. Sadlier also told us that, off the record, some Dutch military had expressed understanding about the ADF's desire to operate under a command and control structure that is less restrictive than ISAF's.

DECISION BY END OF MARCH

15. (S/NF) The ADF proposal for the SOTG is expected to be formally submitted to Cabinet on March 26. Sadlier expected

CANBERRA 00000329 002 OF 002

that the actual deployment would occur very quickly thereafter. They will likely need to request some enablers from the United States, such as helicopter support, air and fire support, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, and satellite communications.

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